

TEACHER PROFESSIONAL AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

The project aims to upgrade and improve the Teacher Professional and Career Development (TPCD) system, contributing in turn to higher quality instruction and higher student achievement in the Republic of Macedonia. The project was initiated by the Bureau for Development of Education (BDE), is implemented by the Macedonian Civic Education Center (MCEC), and is funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). The duration of the project is 30 months commencing December 2012.

Previous interventions addressed only segments of TPCD in Macedonia and did not lead to an integrated system for professional and career development of teachers¹. Taking this into consideration, at the outset of the project, a comprehensive analysis of the existing legislation, documents and solutions, as well as successful TPCD systems in other countries will be conducted. The analysis will help guide the process of developing a TPCD system, as well as evaluating how to maintain existing, viable solutions. It may be possible to retain current professional development solutions, yet for career development, still in very early stages of development, the project plans to develop two models for review and will advocate for adoption of the most suitable one, given the Macedonian context. The system will be developed based on clear standards for quality teaching, accurate and transparent teacher assessment, focused professional development and continuous support to teachers.

ACTIVITIES

The project will contribute toward the alignment and further development of educational policies, revising and ameliorating legal measures and determining budget allocations for professional and career development of teachers.

Steering committee will be established in order to ensure good governance, inclusiveness and ownership over the proposed draft measures. Members of the steering committee will be representatives of key government institutions and professional associations. The Steering Committee will be responsible for reviewing and verifying recommendations from the analysis and key documents developed during the project. The members of the committee will present the key documents to Ministry of Education and Science and Ministry of Finance so that they could review and adopt the proposed legal amendments and budget allocations, emphasizing the relation between cost and benefits of the suggested models for the professional and career development system.

The expert and working groups will be established under each project component, comprised of experts with educational, legal and financial background. They will be responsible for conducting analysis, proposing solutions, designing documents, tools, instruments, etc.

The project activities will revolve around three mutually dependent and inter-related areas:

1. Developing standards for teacher competencies;
2. Preparing a comprehensive legal system for professional and career development;
3. Generating financial schemes for the recommended TPCD models.

Under these areas the following activities will be implemented:

¹ For example: normative regulations for career development were adopted without first developing key competencies and teacher standards and ensuring financial support, and the external assessment of students (which is used to measure the teachers' reliability of students grades given by teachers) was abolished by the Constitutional Court on a number of occasions

1. Determining and cataloguing teacher core competencies

In the absence of a national teacher qualification framework, the project will first identify and analyze existing documents that describe desired knowledge, skills and dispositions², and then, guided by the vision for a contemporary teacher (and the documents of the EU and the OECD), key teacher core competencies will be identified. They will incorporate knowledge and understanding of teachers for their subject content and for the process of teaching and learning, as well as their professional values and practices. The adopted catalogue of teacher core competencies will be submitted for further use by the key institutions responsible for teacher professional development and improvement (the BDE and the VET Center), and it will be disseminated to the wider professional community. The teacher training faculties will become familiar with the catalogue in order to align their study curricula with the required competencies and implement necessary revisions where appropriate.

2. Developing a teacher standards framework

Standards for levels of instruction will be developed in accordance with the Law on Primary and Secondary Education. These standards will describe expected levels of performance for novice-teacher, teacher, teacher-mentor and teacher-advisor. The required set of professional values and practice, teacher knowledge and understanding, and the teaching and learning process will be defined for each career advancement level. The structure of the framework is yet to be defined, though the project will make sure that the framework is aligned with the ongoing developments in the national teacher qualification framework and in line with relevant best practices globally. Teacher standards are intended for: teachers/schools for self-evaluation and planning of their professional development statewide; BDE and the VET Center for surveying TPCD needs for professional and career development of teachers and planning professional development on the national level; SEI, BDE and the VET Center for monitoring and evaluation of teachers' performance; training providers for designing training programs for teachers; teacher training faculties for upgrading their curricula and designing postgraduate studies, etc.

3. Developing procedures and evaluation tools for measuring teacher skills and qualification

Procedures and tools will include assessment of: 1) teacher competencies gained as a result of professional development (for example: certificates from attended training events, postgraduate studies certificates, documented support to novice or underperforming teachers), 2) quality of teaching (for example: classroom observations, lessons plan review, teachers' portfolios, self-evaluation), and 3) teacher effectiveness (for example: students' records, samples of student papers, evidence of student achievement). In the process of developing procedures and instruments, assessment tools will be tested on a sample of teachers and schools. These tools will be able to be used by schools for evaluating and planning of professional development; by municipalities for strategic planning of professional development, by the BDE for identifying the teachers' professional development needs; by the bodies and institutions responsible for career advancement of teachers; and by schools and teachers.

4. Identifying and describing teacher professional development opportunities

Solutions will be suggested to enrich the existing possibilities for continued teacher professional development, from the induction of newly employed teachers, to mentoring, individual professional support to teachers, and school and regional communities of practice. Institutionalization of a much wider range of opportunities for professional development, at the local and national level will be proposed. Professional development opportunities which are not common in Macedonia, but which are easily accessible, economical, and have the potential to positively impact, such as online learning, communities of practice, and virtual networks, will be reviewed.

² Ex. The competencies descriptions in the curricula of the teachers' training faculties, the teachers' competencies developed in the scope of different projects, etc.

5. Developing models for teacher career development (TCD)

The project will develop two models for TCD, which will take into consideration: (1) teacher competencies, teacher practice and value-added to students' achievements (measured by external assessment); (2) teacher competencies, teacher practice and some information on the teachers' impact on student achievements (for example: peer review, parents and students opinion, etc.). The main difference between the two models is the way in which the assessment of the impact of the teachers' work on the students' achievements will be conducted. For both models, the strengths and weaknesses, including validity and reliability, the cost/benefit ratio and the time needed for implementation will be identified.

6. Enhancing the legal system for TPD

In accordance with the adopted recommendations for TPD generated by the project, an expert group will propose clarification for all relevant laws and by-laws, as well as improve and draft necessary documents, guidelines, criteria and instruments, and normative regulations for establishing an effective TPD system. Procedures and protocol introduced will address professional development opportunities at the school level, both local and national, pathways for TPD including possible licensing, adopting a National Teacher Qualification Framework (NTQF), and the roles and responsibilities of the relevant key stakeholders. In order to secure participation, input and acceptance by the different stakeholders, round tables will be organized.

7. Drafting a proposal for TPD funding scenarios

Teacher professional development scenarios, offering different financing schemes, will be developed, along with an explanation of how this aligns with current legislation and regulation. All possible sources of funding will be taken into account, including the national budget, the budgets of local government, and diverse income generating activities of schools, including donations, project honoraria, income from services provided by the school, the business sector (with regard to vocational subject teachers), etc. Scenarios will take into consideration teacher professional development priorities [for example: TPD opportunities which are: a) required as obligatory by the MoES (for example: implementation of a new teaching curriculum), b) a national priority (for example: using ICT in education) and c) of interest to the municipality (for example: improving interethnic education), and d) of interest to the school or individual teachers (for example: inclusive education)]. The funding scheme should include costs related to exploring and assessing TPD needs, monitoring and evaluation of the system for professional development, capacity building of training providers and agencies responsible for TPD, development and publishing of professional publications, developing of e-learning resources, etc.

8. Developing funding scenarios for the two proposed models for TCD

Salaries represent the largest cost in the budget allocated for education. In order for a TPCD system to be put in place, it is key that policy makers responsible for the development and planning of the annual education budgets, take into consideration the proposed measures. Therefore, in parallel with the development of two career development scenarios (as described in activity five), financial strengths and weaknesses will also be identified. In addition to outlining clear criteria for advancement and remuneration as part of TCD, the funding scenarios will include expected institutional investment (BDE, VET Center, SEI, NEC) in the evaluation of the teachers, the evaluation of students' achievement, etc., as part of TCD. During the review and design of different scenarios, which will include mechanisms for determining the salary levels, except for the raises, the project will consider various alternative solutions (for example: different forms of work incentives, for example, including time off, consultancy, grants, leadership in communities of practice, etc.). The scenarios will adhere to the principles of non-discrimination and fairness in the allocation of resources. The scenarios will be well elaborated and documented, as well as supported by international/regional evidence in order to ensure that the financial models and anticipations are realistic and viable to the Macedonian context.

9. Developing a draft regulative framework for two career development system models

Two TCD models will be presented in the scope of public debates in order to get input from the stakeholders, to make further improvements, and to identify which model is more acceptable to the professional community. Provided that the MoES selects one of the models at least nine months prior to the end of the project, the expert group will develop guidelines, criteria and instruments for implementation.

10. Advocating for allocation of financial resources in a transparent and fair manner

The project will support the MoES and local self-government units to present the planned budgeting for TPCD to schools in order to ensure transparency and its fair implementation. In addition, the project will strengthen BDE and the VET Center capacity to empower schools in strategic and transparent planning of TPD.

11. TPCD publication

The publication will provide information about teacher competencies, professional development opportunities and career advancement streams, key legal regulations and a list of important documents for professional development. This publication will be written with the intention of raising self-confidence in teachers, motivating them to invest in their own professional development and recognizing contributions of the teaching occupation.

12. Promotional campaign for the TPCD system

A comprehensive information campaign will be organized on a national level including dissemination of information about the teacher professional development framework, teacher professional development opportunities and career advancement, the benefits for the school and students and the impact on quality of education.